"And then …."

Bouncing back in post pandemic Adur and Worthing

Place based activities and interventions that Adur & Worthing Councils will take to enable our communities to thrive, prosper, be healthy and resilient following the pandemic of Spring 2020.

A&W

ADUR & WORTHING
C O U N C I L S

Introduction - The Post Pandemic Landscape

In June 2020, it's still too early to fully understand all of the impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic. What is clear however, is that to add to the existing climate crisis we face a public health crisis and an economic and financial crisis which is likely to last over the medium term. We are mindful that we are planning for "coming out" of the immediate pandemic response … and we don't hold all of the cards to know what, how and where we should best be acting.   We appreciate that "recovery" may have many phases, our resilience will need to be on-going.

In such complexity the wisest movers act, review and adapt on an on-going basis. There is little point producing a "complete blueprint" or "Recovery Plan" which will inevitably need to change and be revised as new data is received or national developments take place. We are not starting from scratch. When "*Platforms for our Places : Going Further*" was approved by both Councils 6 months ago it set a framework for activity to take us through to the end of 2022. The 5 platforms remain fundamentally strong and the right framework to focus our post pandemic activity. Most, if not all, of the commitments we set out against the 5 platforms remain valid, some of them now need accelerating. And, we had begun before the pandemic brought a halt, our overall approach has provided adaptivity and resilience and proven invaluable.

The pandemic (and its economic and social impacts) has caused considerable harm to individuals, communities and businesses across Adur and Worthing. The secondary impacts of recession and potential impact on institutions and businesses will cause after-shocks that may last for some time. The scale of some of the challenges are unprecedented but the ambition of communities and elected Councillors has not reduced one jot. Indeed, in the face of the challenges, we see the opportunity to move further and faster (and new emerging opportunities) providing a powerful catalysing energy. Delivering our ambitions in "*Platforms for our Places : Going Further"* has not got any easier … it's got considerably harder, boldness and speed of action will be required. It is for that purpose that we put these thoughts together, rather than waiting months for "perfect data" to do "perfect planning".

For each of the 5 platforms we identify a number of catalytic activities that we will start immediately (and around which we build the "recovery" of our places and communities). Many are long term activities, the benefits seen in years not months. All are important.

We remain wholly committed to creating the healthy, prosperous, thriving and resilient

communities that Adur and Worthing require to face whatever further challenges may come.

The way forward will be complex, not clear or easy to map and explain. The role of Local Government (which was changing anyway) will change more quickly and in our work we recognise the complexity of what we do and ensure the connectedness of places, individuals, communities and institutions.   Indeed the unifying factor of "place" gives us an important foundation for our activity.

In the next sections we set out the "Platform Plays" that will help our communities bounce back the fastest and in the final section we note the importance, not just of "what we do"; but of "how we do it".

In this document we cross-reference to "Platforms for our Places : Going Further" e.g. [P4OP : 1.1] to enable read across where relevant.

Platform 1 - Prosperous Places

This is the platform that has been hit hardest by the national response to the pandemic. The cessation of large parts of the UK's economic activity and the probability of only a gradual return, together, with the collapse of some businesses will have significant and long term impacts.

It looks highly likely that the UK will go into recession. At least over the medium term high levels of public debt, an increase in some forms of taxation and possible inflation are likely to have an adverse impact on consumer expenditure and some market investments. The role that National and Local Government play in supporting our economies will therefore be significant.

Locally, our hospitality, leisure and cultural sectors will face particular challenges and for businesses with complex logistics and national or overseas markets there may be real challenges getting going again. This includes our Creative and Digital sector that had been showing significant growth in Adur and Worthing.

As Councils we need to make new interventions, to underwrite risk or liability and help local businesses to thrive in difficult times. In addition to supporting local industry that produces and sells nationally and internationally, we will need to look at small local businesses and the rise of micro-entrepreneurialism among those who may have lost their jobs and are looking to start again.

People returning to activities in healthy and safe workplaces or public spaces will require different ways of operating. For some a reduction in the need for office space and previous levels of transport activity.   With the challenge will come new opportunities. For example, there is some evidence that when people begin planning leisure trips, they may favour domestic destinations and coastal towns as opposed to cities - so we need to be ready and welcoming

The impact will be felt across all sectors of the local economy and will include our academic institutions who provide training and skills opportunities.

Here we focus upon what we can do now to stimulate economic activity. We have built good relationships (most recently through the process of distributing grants) with our local businesses and we probably have the best understanding of those businesses and the challenges they face that we have ever had.

The ambitions that we had set out in *"Platforms for our Places : Going Further"* are now more relevant than ever. Our focus on jobs and skills; promoting confidence in our places to trade and attract investment; and our "wise regulation" approaches will

help ensure that businesses get the best opportunity and support to thrive and survive.

We have identified 8 "significant plays" for focus

- **partnership and support for our local businesses**
  We will work with our local businesses across sectors to understand their needs and support them as we move into recovery. Signposting **access to funding opportunities and business advice** and working alongside our businesses to promote **access to new markets** and **new business models** will be vital.   Working alongside our partners across the Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership area and Greater Brighton sub region, the councils will actively seek to **promote new opportunities for business development, new jobs and infrastructure**.

- **access to employment and skills**
  We will work with the business schools of the local Universities and our partners across the Greater Brighton and Coast to Capital LEP area to **support access to core business skills** to help people find new jobs and start businesses.

  We will work to support our local employers and schools and colleges to make the best use of **apprenticeships** to help young people entering the job market for the first time (as well as older people displaced in economic turbulence).

  We will work with our local businesses to identify opportunities to secure **funding for innovation and new skills** for businesses needing to change their business model and move into new markets.

- **safe spaces and visitor confidence** *[P4OP : 1.3]*   For each of our principal town centres (Southwick, Shoreham, Lancing, Worthing) we will develop a **programme of works designed to ensure that people feel safe to visit and trade**. Working with our local traders, we will work at pace to deliver changes to the layout and operation of public spaces to promote safety and a positive experience.

  We will seek to get our **local markets** up and running as quickly as possible, offering traders and shoppers a safe environment. In addition, we will work with our local retailers and traders to provide additional opportunities to trade outdoors in a safe environment. To achieve this we will use our powers and responsibilities to make public spaces available on a temporary basis for market type events.

- To support our hospitality, leisure and tourism sectors we will work hard to ensure that we are ready. We will ensure that as residents and visitors return, **our public spaces look their best** - we will prioritise the maintenance, repair and repainting of our street furniture, parks, promenade, public spaces and associated buildings.

  We will look to bring forward key aspects of our public realm work ahead of schedule and to deliver **cycling and walking route enhancements**, including a series of 'pop up' opportunities. The rapid deployment of **citizen wifi** will support our aspirations.

- **major development and investment projects** *[P4OP : 1.8]* Major new development across our places will deliver thousands of new homes and jobs.

  We will take every opportunity to **accelerate the programme for delivery,** including building out new projects ourselves and in partnership with others. The emphasis will be on sustainable growth; high levels of connectivity and skills and learning as an integral part of any major scheme.

  We will actively support those whose projects are already underway and use our regulatory powers wisely to create the right conditions for others to come forward.   Where projects are stuck or can be catalysed we will consider what if any interventions we as Councils can make to unblock and speed delivery.

- **a new rental model for council owned commercial properties**
  To support our local businesses we will undertake a re-working of the traditional approach to renting council owned commercial buildings. We will develop an **'easy in easy out' rental model** that applies to a designated number of our properties. We will publicise the model through our existing business partnerships and use the direct links with businesses that we have established through the Government's business grant schemes.

  We will **re-purpose existing buildings to provide flexible space** for startups, small businesses and those needing 'move on' space. In any new acquisitions we will provide the digital infrastructure and connectivity that small businesses need to foster their growth and development.

- **growing our micro-entrepreneurs** *[P4OP : 1.7]*
  Very small businesses (or people freelancing for part of the week) are likely to be a vital part of wealth creating for our residents … and supply chains for larger business. Access to funding can be a key challenge for

micro-entrepreneurs in their early stages of development or when they are looking to scale up. There is an opportunity to **re-purpose the small business grant scheme** that we administer as part of a county-wide scheme (funded by Pooled Business Rates) to target support for micro-entrepreneurs. Using the strength of each Council's covenant, we will work with our partners to develop a scheme whereby we **act as short term guarantor to support micro-entrepreneurs** seeking loan funding to start up.

- **support for creative industries** *[P4OP : 1.4]*
  In the short term, we will work with self-employed people in this sector to secure **access to grant funding**.   We will accelerate our work with our Greater Brighton partners and Coast to Capital to develop a **tailored growth programme** to develop investment pipelines, places and spaces to do business and develop the skills and talent needed.   This will include helping to identify new opportunities for creative digital entrepreneurs to enter **new sectors** such as health and well being.

Platform 2 - Thriving People and Communities

The pandemic has inspired an extraordinary response from residents and communities across Adur and Worthing. Stepping up by volunteering, community organising, running a food depot and food drops and providing support for vulnerable people. The work between individuals, community groups, the formal Community and Voluntary Sector, Local Authorities and other partners in community has been as impressive as it has been vital.

And the "lockdown" period has created foundations. The impressive work of neighbourhood based networks that are able to identify need, organise and provide, build resilience and support the work of other agencies in care and support is perhaps unprecedented in recent times. The ability of various agencies to work jointly to co-design and collaborate on delivery has provided some strong examples of platforms in community being created, particularly in supporting our most vulnerable residents.

Some of our communities will face even more challenging times. An economic recession will inevitably lead to strain on the most vulnerable, new demands placed on health services (physical and mental) and related housing, money, debt and potentially domestic abuse issues. The challenges were significant already, an economic downturn is only likely to exacerbate them and unless we are careful divisions may grow. The Councils will continue to provide universal services and provide essential safety nets. The additional resources, knowledge, time and energies of communities, targeted well, will be essential to a strong recovery and more connected communities.

It is too early to be clear what the precise needs will be over the short, medium and longer term, though we have good data about some of the ways in which we need to act. The focus in "*Platforms for our Places : Going Further"* around understanding communities (at the hyper-local and neighbourhood level); housing supply; supporting community and social entrepreneurs, targeting interventions at "preventative" work and the ability to bring new resources to play are already on the agenda. The pandemic makes the bringing to fruition of a number of these plans that much more important and urgent.   It remains the ambition of the residents and communities of Adur and Worthing to create happy, healthy, thriving and resilient places in which to live where people are connected and have the ability to help themselves and each other in creating sustainable futures.

And we have identified 6 "big plays" which build on the community activity evident over the lockdown period and start to co-produce strong platforms in our

neighbourhoods:-

- Understanding just **what has been "illuminated"** or shown in terms of networks and connectedness in community and being clear what is needed to support them to grow, moving forward to connect or create enduring networks of active citizens. We will use these networks to connect people of different generations enabling them to thrive in their communities. In this work we would explore new approaches to participative and deliberative democracy and how they add to and strengthen representative democracy across our places. : [P4OP : 2.3]

- We will build on the **digital infrastructure** we have created for the Covid response and develop it to create tools which can help to support our community networks and make best use of our new ultrafast connectivity. We will also use this to build on the data we have found so valuable in the lockdown period and use it to develop community insight and connectivity [P4OP : 2.3]

- Developing the **local food system** so that it supports and expands local food production and better manages the use of food waste. Our immediate focus will be on understanding the food system outside of the paid economy in order to create access to healthy food for everyone.

- Developing an **open spaces approach to leisure** [P4OP : 2.4] focusing on using our indoor and outdoor leisure and park spaces to provide the canvas for greater wellbeing and mental health. We want to build on the new habits people have formed around their use of open spaces for exercise and community and ensure that we can support these new habits to be long term changes in our communities.

- Developing **"a Housing First" model** [P4OP : 2.2] for people that are sleeping rough and who have complex needs with no housing options. We want to develop a strong and effective wrap around of support shared by all agencies and develop an effective behaviour change coaching approach.

- Expediting our next phase of **"Opening doors"** [P4OP : 2.2] developing an holistic approach for families, using newly available private rental accommodation as a platform for wider support around their lives to enable them to thrive. Linking closely to active citizenship and social prescribing to help people connect to their communities as a platform for support

- Developing **new models to create much needed new housing** across all tenures. Recognising the limitations of both the "HRA model" and the "S.106 model" rapidly exploring other ways to access funding and skills needed to bring forward new homes.

Platform 3 - Tackling Climate Change and Supporting our Natural Environments

A public health crisis has created an economic and financial crisis. This is overlaid on the existing climate crisis that Adur & Worthing Councils and communities were working upon. Whilst the scale of the challenge is high, the opportunity to work across themes to the same ends is real. We already have significant community activity on a wide range of climate change and ecological agendas which have continued unabated during the pandemic. Whether it's growing, cooking, improving and re-wilding land, planting, installing clean energy micro generations, interest in local food supplies, clean water or healthy marine environments ... we have active communities working away. Those communities have demonstrated that they are ready and willing (through our Climate Conference in March 2020) to further the agenda at pace.

New ways of working and travelling, greater appreciation of clean air and benefits of natural environments and better public realm are all likely bi-products of the pandemic. A real interest in local circular economies (including shopping and local production) as well as a number of significant large employers being clear about their role in a future low carbon new economy, creates real opportunity to reset the way we do business and live across our places.

The agenda we had set in *"Platforms for our Places : Going Further"* has never been more valuable or more urgent. Climate Emergency and solutions to it that play into stronger, thriving, resilient communities and economic recovery.

And we have identified 7 "big plays":-

- We will push forward work to **achieve carbon neutrality** [P4OP : 3.2] at the Councils by 2030, transitioning to renewable energy, switching to electric and hydrogen vehicles, and retaining much of the recent major shift to home working

- Rapidly assess our options for major investment in **renewable energy** [P4OP : 3.3] to support offsetting targets within our carbon reduction plan and potential long term revenue generation

- Lead a major shift to **walking and cycling** [P4OP : 3.7] post coronavirus, delivering pop up cycle lanes identified in the local cycling and walking plan, expanding the bike share scheme and supporting new cycling projects

- Creating a new, ambitious programme to **rewild green spaces** [P4OP : 3.5], working with communities, developers, businesses and partner organisations

to maximise biodiversity wherever possible, planting trees and managing woodland

- Working with partners to regenerate **local marine and estuarine ecosystems** [P4OP : 3.5], restoring kelp, seagrass and saltmarsh habitats, delivering a range of ecosystem services including increased fish stocks, carbon capture, biodiversity offsetting, and flood risk management.

- Implementing the **Smart Local Energy Systems** [P4OP : 3.3] project, a £32m programme of linked initiatives to create a local smart energy grid combining solar PV, second life battery storage, electric vehicle charging, air source heat pumps, hydrogen fuelling, and marine source heat pump technology

- Holding our first **Climate Assembly** [P4OP : 3.1] to engage residents in tackling climate change locally, building consensus and catalysing actionable local projects in community.

Platform 4 - Good Services and New Solutions

Adur & Worthing Councils (as service providers) were severely tested by the pandemic. Talented people, adapting fast, using good tech platforms and providing clear leadership were already in place and able to mobilise quickly. All elements proved critical. It was not an accident, we have been building our capacities and capabilities over the last 4 years and the investments made proved sound. We moved rapidly to provide a number of new services (at times jointly with others) and as we stand some of those down, we will need to consider what we have learnt (what's worked well in our new approaches) and avoid going back to an "old normal". That may no longer serve our communities.

Our response has been widely regarded as good. The financial cost has been considerable. A number of the assumptions underpinning our budget setting in February 2020 will have completely changed (and at the time of writing there is no certainty over future financial demands). Despite some additional funding from Central Government it has by no means covered the cost of responding. This will have significant impact on the Councils finances not just for this year but over the medium term. We recognise that in our ambitious plans for the future (and how we help our communities come out of the post-pandemic recession) … we will want to make new investments and incur new costs. This will not be easy.

Like many large employers our staff have proved they can work effectively remotely, and we will need to consider the impact and opportunity this may have over the longer term. Our budget strategies will require creating new revenues, new commercial streams of income, as well as continuing to reduce our cost base using our technology platforms.

Our "6 big plays":-

- Recognising that remote working will now be a key feature, we will review our **accommodation needs** and design new working models that support agile team working and help strengthen our relationship with communities and partners [P4OP : 4.6]

- Work with elected Councillors to understand their experience of working remotely and developing **new digital skills** in order to look at how we might build some of the changes that we have made to the way business is done into future training and support for Councillors [P4OP : 4.1]

- We will take significant steps in the **redesign of our services**, creating more personal, digitally enabled services, and removing out of date processes and

systems. We will use our "Good Service design principles" to ensure that the vulnerable receive the best support and access, and our staff are freed up to use their skills and experience to best effect [P4OP : 4.2, 4.4]

- We will further accelerate the **shift to cloud technologies** that have served us well in recent years, allowing staff to work from anywhere using the very best platforms [P4OP : 4.1]

- We will carefully review our **medium term financial strategy** in light of the pandemic, we will reassess our commercial and investment strategies and align them to new opportunities, applying sensible spend controls while creating a financial strategy that recognises our role in shaping the future [P4OP : 4.3]

- We will go further in **developing our people** through active learning and coaching, emphasising vital new skills for the future in civic entrepreneurialism, systems thinking, strategic and service design, digital and data [P4OP : 4.5]

Platform 5 - Leadership of Place

The pandemic has tested a number of institutions that make up the leadership of our places. And we have seen a variety of responses from individuals, businesses, community groups and those institutions, many of whom rising to the challenge and responding superbly.

As Councils we have showed adaptivity; the importance of democratic legitimacy; the value of being able to work with our trusted relationships; our capabilities with data and technology; our ability to use innovation to create ideas and design to bring them to fruition and a welcome degree of ability to get out of "service silos". All of these were helped, framed and enabled by the investments we have made in the leadership capacity of staff and elected Councillors. We have seen and been able to work with significant amounts of community will, at times ceding "power" for "influence" and at times (where relationships have proved clunky or not moved at the right pace) we have worked with skill and grace to bring about strong and rapid solutions. We have shown agency and the confidence to act decisively.

And we need to build on that. There is much to be proud of in our response to the pandemic. As we shift to understanding the new landscape we will use those capacities and capabilities … and inevitably develop new ones.

In *"Platforms for our Places : Going Further"* we set out a range of place leadership activities, many of which have commenced and are on-going. We will need to develop a number of these further and faster. Our regional and national reputation (as a place to innovate, invest and bring things to fruition): our ability to work with civic data; our technical platform (and the broader tech infrastructure) as well as the importance of capacity building in emergency planning and civil contingencies (for other shocks that may follow) will be key and are already mapped out for us.

For Leadership of Place our work is not doing "new things" but how we deliver the agendas set out in Platforms 1-4. How we build relationships, how we influence, how we collaborate, how we co-design and how we ensure the ambition and boldness that communities and their elected representatives are seeking can be delivered. Whilst some may hunker down and wait for the storm to blow over … we see the new landscape as pregnant with opportunity and intend to work with our communities and other partners to take up those opportunities.

Our 6 key plays are as follows:-

- **Place Branding and Reputation**; (continuing to build our reputation at a regional and national level, being more directive in some agendas and more

participative and enabling in the development of others). [P4OP : 5.1]

- Furthering and **Developing Key Partnerships**. We have good relationships (across the board) and there will be certain key relationships that we now need to focus upon in order to seize the opportunities that present. [P4OP : 5.3]

- Leading and Influencing the **tech infrastructure** of our Places and the ability to use it for our Communities. This will be done at times in coalition (County wide or with the Greater Brighton Economic Board) at other times we will not wish to wait for the pace of the slowest movers and we will continue to develop and apply tech infrastructure where it makes sense for our communities. [P4OP : 5.2]

- **Place Making : Town Centre Renewal and Reimagining**. This is an area where perhaps for too long we have waited for others to come up with ideas … now we will need to be bolder and more directive in how we act. Our High Streets have suffered (and will continue to do so) whilst market solutions may come along in the medium term … short term we need to act fast and differently. [P4OP : 5.2]

- **Civic data**.   The availability of individuals, communities and businesses to use data we hold to create value and prosperity has never been more important. This is an area we have talked about for a while, but now need to be clear of the data we need to collect and how we will use it and share it. [P4OP : 5.6]

- The pandemic, and the community response to it has enabled a variety of community activity at the micro level. We will support a renaissance of community based "small platoon" activity.   If ever there was a platform to enable others to work upon, this is it. In so doing we wish to fully explore the potential for **participative and deliberative democratic decision making** in ways that respect that renaissance of community activity. We will also enable our democratically elected Councillors to benefit from the wisdom and the willingness of the communities they represent. [P4OP : 5.5]

How will we do it?

This first set of activities are not a blueprint for everything will do. Rather it focuses our attention on critical activities to commence over the next 3-6 months. Thereafter we review and reset.

Whilst the pandemic has caused disruption to our "*Platforms for our Places : Going Further"* agenda, overall the agenda remains a strong one and we take the opportunities presented to move forward. We are adapting to the new environments as they emerge and moving quickly.

Whilst we will need to be influential at national and regional levels the activities we set out here are primarily actions that we can take as District and Borough Councils (with others at times) and those that will have profound impacts we believe on our communities and neighbourhoods.

Some of this activity requires no new money or additional support. We have talented staff, budgeted financial resources, data, technology, property and relationships ... all valuable assets that we can leverage. The speed that we have moved to create new services and approaches during the six weeks of the pandemic can be maintained over the next few months to support the longer term solutions.

And there remains a significant financial challenge. We will need to bring in more revenues and borrow more in order to create the underlying investments necessary to reboot our economic and social recoveries. Whilst some of that borrowing will inevitably be of an "invest to save" type basis (with returns over the medium and longer term) we will also need to seek other sources of funding from public and private sector partners and intervene more in our local economy then perhaps at any time in our past.

In short we must see the disturbance and challenge caused by the pandemic as an opportunity to accelerate our work.   We remain committed to creating the happy, healthy, prosperous and resilient communities right at the heart of our "*Platforms for our Places : Going Further"* approach.